



COALDALE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

"Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light for my path" Psalm 119:105

2008-8 Street Coaldale, Alberta T1M 1L1 Ph: (403)-345-4055 Fax: (403)-345-6436

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www.coaldalechristianschool.com



CHILD ABUSE and NEGLECT POLICY FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL and VOLUNTEERS OF COALDALE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

We believe that every person is wonderfully made in the image of God and inherently deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, and kindness. Children, as a vulnerable sector, must be especially valued and protected.

The fall of the human race into sin and the depravity that resulted has altered God's original design for this world including our relationships. While it is true that sin in general affects the whole of human life, few sins tear at the fabric of relationships with as much human misery and pain as the sin of abuse. Abuse devalues human beings and devastates its victims.

The board, staff and volunteers of Coaldale Christian School are responsible for contributing to a safe community that confronts sin, including the sin of abuse. We are fully committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all our students. To that end, Coaldale Christian School will not tolerate any form of abuse of students under any circumstances.

The purpose of this policy is to provide specific guidance to the board, staff and volunteers of Coaldale Christian School to prevent child abuse and to provide reporting protocols if child abuse is suspected or known to have occurred.



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Child Abuse and Neglect Policy for School Personnel and Volunteers of Coaldale Christian School

1. Preamble

Ensuring that a School Board has policies and procedures in place to respond promptly and effectively to incidents of neglect and abuse is a responsible approach to protect both students and the School Authority. This document provides guidelines for school personnel when responding to situations where child neglect and/or abuse is suspected or known to have occurred.

This document underscores the importance of a collaborative approach between independent school authorities and personnel, parents, the Alberta Ministry of Children's Services, and the police to respond effectively to incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect and to ensure that children are protected.

Coaldale Christian School is committed to the prevention of child abuse and the enhancement of the well-being and safety of the students entrusted to its care. This commitment is made first and foremost in response and obedience to God's Word. It is also an ethical and legal commitment as a response to governmental expectations for the well-being and safety of students.

Educators play an important role in protecting God's young image bearers. Because teachers have regular contact with children, they are often the first adults to be aware of child abuse. Christian school communities may perceive themselves to be immune to abuse in families, but sin also affects Christians in this way. Therefore, educators must be alert to the possibility of an abused child in the school and be prepared to help the student in need.

Recognize child abuse and neglect

Child abuse is defined by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. Anyone can contact Children's Services for information when they are worried about the safety or well-being of a child or youth.

There are 4 types of child abuse and neglect:

1. neglect
2. emotional abuse
3. physical abuse
4. sexual abuse

NEGLECT

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs. It involves an act of omission by the parent or guardian, resulting in (or likely to result in) harm to the child. Neglect may include failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, love and affection, basic health care, supervision or protection from risks to the extent that the child's physical health, development or safety is, or is likely to be, harmed.

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EMOTIONAL ABUSE

This is the most difficult type of abuse to define and recognize. It may range from ignoring, to habitually humiliating the child, to withholding life-sustaining nurturing. Generally, it involves acts or omissions by those in contact with a child that are likely to have serious, negative emotional impacts. Emotional abuse may occur separately from, or along with, other forms of abuse and neglect. It includes the emotional harm caused by witnessing domestic violence. Emotional abuse can include a pattern of:

- scapegoating
- rejection
- criticizing the child by calling them names like stupid, bad, useless or a troublemaker
- humiliating the child by blaming or belittling them
- refusing to comfort the child when the child is upset or frightened
- setting unrealistic expectations, threatening, or accusing the child
- cruel or unusual treatment or punishment
- manipulation

Emotional harm

When emotional abuse is chronic and persistent, it can result in emotional harm to the child. As found in the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, a child is defined as emotionally harmed if they demonstrate severe:

- anxiety
- depression
- withdrawal
- self-destructive or aggressive behaviour

It is important to note that a display of one of these attributes can also be triggered by other factors and does not necessarily point directly to emotional abuse.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is a deliberate physical assault or action by a person that results in, or is likely to result in, physical damage to a child. It includes the use of excessive force to discipline a child or prevent a child from harming him/herself or others. The injuries sustained by the child may vary in severity and range from minor bruising, burns, welts or bite marks to major fractures of the bones or skull, to, in the most extreme cases, death.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of another person. It includes:

- non-touching activities such as:
 - sexual references to the child's body/behaviour by words/gestures
 - having inappropriate sexual conversations
 - making the child watch someone expose themselves
 - deliberate exposure of the child to sexual activity or material
- sexual touching activities such as:
 - fondling
 - making them touch an adult's or other child's genital area or private areas
 - sexual intercourse with the child or youth (vaginal, oral, or anal)



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- menacing or threatening sexual acts, obscene gestures, obscene communications, or stalking
- requests that the child expose their body for sexual purposes
- sexual aspects of organized or ritual abuse

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse that occurs when a child engages in a sexual activity, usually through manipulation or coercion, in exchange for money, drugs, food, shelter, emotional support, or other considerations. Sexual activity includes:

- performing sexual acts
- sexually explicit activity for entertainment
- involvement with escort or massage parlour services
- appearing in pornographic images
- luring a young person via the Internet, social media, apps and/or chat sites for sexual purposes

Anyone who seeks out a child or youth and uses them for sexual purposes is a sexual exploiter. They can:

- be male or female, young or old, rich, or poor
- be a new acquaintance or a close relative or friend
- pose as a boyfriend or girlfriend or friend

2. Guiding Principles:

The following guiding principles are provided to inform all parties serving children and families.

- The safety and well-being of children is the paramount considerations.
- Children are entitled to be protected from abuse, neglect, harm, or threat of harm.
- The responsibility for the care, upbringing, and protection of children rests primarily with the parents.
- The Government of Alberta, *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, requires that any individual who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the safety, security or development of a child is endangered and therefore is in need of intervention shall forthwith report the matter to a director. Any person that suspects a child in need of intervention but fails to report it is guilty of an offence.
 - This Act refers to abuse that is caused or allowed by the parent/guardian. It includes abuse by a person who is under the direct responsibility of the parent/guardian, such as a common-law spouse or a babysitter.
 - "Director" means a person designated by the Minister of Children's Services as a director for the purposes of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and the Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act. This means Children's Services, and the police where required.

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3. **Protocols:** There are different protocols to follow if the abuse involves a parent or guardian, or if the parent/guardian is not involved.

a. **Protocol on Reporting Child Abuse and/or Neglect Involving Parents or Parental Failure to Protect a Child**

Any school personnel or volunteer who suspects or has information that a child is being abused/neglected or at risk of being abused/neglected by a parent or where the parent is failing to protect a child in these circumstances, must promptly report it to Children's Services and the Police where required in the following manner:

Step One: Gather the information to report. The person making a report does not need to have all the following information before making a report, especially if the child is in immediate danger. Provide the information that you can and provide follow-up information as required. When reporting suspected child abuse or neglect, the child welfare worker may ask questions such as:

- The name, age, grade, address, and telephone number of the child
- The names of the parents and/or guardians
- Any immediate concerns for the student's safety
- Why you believe the child needs protection
- The alleged offender's name, address, and relationship to the child, if known
- Any other children, such as siblings, who may be involved or at risk
- Any previous incidents or concerns for the child
- Any relevant statements made by the child (see Appendix B for more information)
- In cases where the child or youth has confided in you, as soon after as possible, find a private place. Write what you heard and saw. Be sure to:
 - Use the same words the child used.
 - Describe the way the child looked, how they behaved and other things you noticed.
 - Keep your notes private and secure.

Step Two: Report your concern to Children's Services, Government of Alberta.

If a child is in immediate danger, or if a criminal offense has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur, call the police. Make a report to Children's Services after you have called the police. In a case where the disclosure suggests that the child is in immediate danger, the child is kept at the school until the police arrive.

- If the alleged incident happened in Coaldale or areas to the north, south or east, make the report to Taber Children's Services. If the alleged incident happened anywhere west of Coaldale, make the report to Lethbridge Children's Services. When a report is made, the caller can request to speak with an intake worker who will take the information.
 - Taber Children's Services: 403-223-7921
 - Lethbridge Children's Services: 403-381-5500 or 403-381-5555

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- Alternately or after hours, call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-5437(KIDS)
- You can report anonymously or give your name and telephone number. If you provide this information, their policy is to never reveal your identity to others.
- A note should be made at this time of the following:
 - The name of the intake worker receiving the call
 - The time and date the call was made
 - The action proposed by Children's Services

Step Three: Inform the school administration (principal and vice-principal). If an administrator is the alleged abuser or is in a position of conflict of interest, then school personnel/volunteer, after reporting to the previously mentioned agencies, will report to the chairperson of the Board governing the school and the other administrator.

- All parties are reminded that no investigation should be carried out by school personnel, volunteers, administration or board at this time or any other time. This could interfere with the investigation by authorities.
- All parties will not contact the parents or guardians who may be involved in allegedly abusing the child or failing to protect a child in these circumstances; this is the responsibility of the child welfare worker.
- All parties will cooperate fully with any resulting investigation, including assisting with the interviews of children and staff as necessary.
- Confidentiality is to be strictly maintained by all parties.

Step Four: A social worker from Children's Services (and a police officer in cases of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse) will interview the child, usually on the same day the complaint is made.

- School personnel should not insist on being present during the interview
- The child has the right to ask that someone be present to support the child and must be made aware of that right by Children's Services and/or the police

Step Five: Children's Services (or the police) will then investigate and may interview the alleged abuser and other family members. A decision concerning the safety of the child will be made by Children's Services at this time.

Step Six: During the investigation and/or at the end of the investigation and disposition of the case, the school personnel/volunteer, the principal and vice-principal (or chairperson as alternate from step three above) should meet to discuss the steps the school could take to assist the child throughout the process.

Duties of Administration (Principal and Vice-Principal):

- Ensure that the school environment is safe during any investigation
- Support students who are victims of child abuse and/or neglect
- Support the school personnel who has reported the concern
- Ensure that the best educational interests of the child/youth are protected
- Ensure no investigation is made by administration or school personnel
- Ensure proper identification is produced by the social worker

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- Cooperate fully with any resulting investigation, including assisting with the interviews of children and school personnel as necessary
- Document the proceedings, noting dates, times, people involved, and actions proposed
- The school will protect personal information regarding the investigation, including the reporter's identity, against improper or unauthorized disclosure or use.
- School personnel should not share information with outside agencies about child abuse investigations, particularly if the police are involved.
- Reports or written observations on alleged abuse or neglect are to be kept separate from the student's school record and any other record accessible to other staff. Any record made regarding alleged or reported abuse should be kept secure and disclosed only to police or caseworkers during the investigation process.
- The principal should be prepared to follow the case by contacting Children's Services to learn the results of the investigation as these results pertain to the school
- The principal, vice-principal (or chairperson as alternate) and the reporter should meet to discuss the steps the school could take to assist the child throughout the process

Recommendations:

- Anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be physically harmed, sexually abused or exploited, or neglected by a parent or guardian, or otherwise in need of protection is legally responsible to report promptly to a child welfare worker. "Reason to believe" simply means that, based on what was seen or information received, a person believes a child has been or is likely to be at risk. The reporter need not be certain. It is the child welfare worker's job to determine whether abuse or neglect has occurred or is likely to occur.
- School personnel, who are uncertain about their duty to report, will consult with a Children's Services worker who can discuss the options and appropriate course of action
- School personnel, who are unsure if the child is in immediate danger or if a crime has been committed, will consult with the police
- School personnel are NOT responsible for gathering evidence of abuse, only to inform Children's Services of a reasonable suspicion of abuse. School personnel should not, therefore, actively seek a disclosure of abuse from the child. The responsibility for investigating allegations of child abuse rests with child intervention authorities and/or the police. The police and/or child intervention authorities are to co-ordinate their investigations to avoid subjecting the child to repeated interviews.
- A disclosure made by a child to school personnel must be recorded in the child's own words. The record should include observed facts, such as the child's behaviour, actions, comments, persons present at the time and physical marks. School personnel, while continuing to provide support, should NOT interview the child after receiving the initial disclosure from the child as this could interfere with the investigation.
- It is not the duty of school personnel to assess the severity of the abuse.
- The obligation to report is not discharged until the individual has reported directly to a caseworker. The teacher should then notify the principal and follow the school's procedures for reporting abuse. It is the responsibility of the initiator of the report to

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ensure child intervention authorities are notified. There are no provisions in the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* that provide for a chain of reporting.

- Teachers do not need specific permission from a principal before making a report directly to Children's Services. Further, no principal can direct a teacher not to report if the teacher believes abuse exists.

b. Protocol Where Allegations of Child Abuse are Made Against Someone Other than a Parent/Guardian

- This section addresses abuse that is not covered by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, meaning abuse NOT caused or allowed by the parent/guardian. It addresses abuse that takes place in a facility outside the child's home or is caused by a person who is not under the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Facilities outside the child's home may include schools, day care, other homes, recreational settings, hospitals. Other people with regular access to children, who are not under the responsibility of the parent/guardian, may include teachers, coaches, friends, pastors, employers, physicians, and entertainers.
- In situations where abuse occurs in a facility outside the home or is perpetrated by a person who is not the child's parent/guardian or under the responsibility of the parent/guardian, there is no obligation to report under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. Rather, any school personnel or volunteer who suspects or has information that a child is being abused/neglected or at risk of being abused/neglected by a person other than a parent, must promptly report it in the following manner:

Step One: Gather the information to report. This includes the reasons for your suspicion or the disclosure the child has made to you. (For more information on suspicion/disclosure, see Appendix B). The person making a report does not need to have all of information before making a report, especially if the child is in immediate danger. Provide the information that you can and provide follow-up information as required.

- In cases where the child or youth has confided in you, as soon after as possible, find a private place. Write what you heard and saw. Be sure to:
 - Use the same words the child used
 - Describe the way the child looked, how they behaved and other things you noticed
 - Keep your notes private and secure
- School personnel, while continuing to provide support, should NOT interview the child after receiving the initial disclosure from the child as this could interfere with any investigation, should that be necessary. Interviewing, especially in criminal activity, is a complex process and must be left to the trained professional.



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Step Two: Report your concern to the child's parent/guardian as soon as possible.

- It is best to report your concern in a face-to-face meeting.
- Share all the information you have. Remember that this may be a shock to the parent. They may need time to process the information.
- The well-being of the child is ultimately the parent's responsibility. You may offer your assistance.
- Encourage the parent to contact police when a criminal activity has occurred or is suspected.
- Encourage the parent by providing any known resources for dealing with the abuse.
- If the child is abused in a facility, the referring person should advise the parent/guardian to contact those responsible for the facility to ensure the child will be protected when he or she returns to the facility and that other children are protected.
- Be available for follow-up.
- Keep a copy of all information in a secure place in case it is subsequently needed.
- If, subsequently, the parent/guardian fails to take reasonable steps to protect the child, then you must report to Children's Services and the police where required in accordance with section 3 above.

Step Three: In cases where the circumstances will affect the school directly, the school administration (principal and vice-principal) must be notified. If an administrator is the alleged abuser or is in a position of conflict of interest, then school personnel/volunteer, after reporting to the parents/guardians, will report to the chairperson of the School Board and the other administrator.

- All parties are reminded that no investigation should be carried out by school personnel, volunteers, administration or board at this time or any other time. This could interfere with the investigation by authorities.
- All parties will cooperate fully with the parents or guardians. They will support them as appropriate in Christian love, for the well-being and education of the child.
- All parties will cooperate fully with any resulting investigation, including assisting with the interviews of children and staff as necessary.
- Confidentiality is to be strictly maintained by all parties.

Note:

Abuse by another student is not covered by the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*. When allegation or suspicion involves another student or peer as the alleged offender, and the school's investigation establishes it as fact, Section 24 of the Alberta *School Act* provides for appropriate disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion.

c. Protocol Where Allegations of Child Abuse are Made Against Coaldale Canadian Reformed School Staff, Volunteers, Contract Service Providers or Others in the School Setting

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It is the legal responsibility of school officials and employees to provide a safe learning environment for students. If the school officials and employees believe that a child is being abused or at risk, there is a legal duty to report the concern to the local Children's Services worker and the police if the child is in imminent danger.

- I. Independent School officials have the primary responsibility for dealing with allegations of child abuse involving independent school employees, volunteers, contract service providers, or others on independent school property or supervising an independent school activity outside of the school.

- i. **Staff Member**

Where there are allegations of child abuse by a school staff member, the principal is responsible for reporting the matter to Children's Services if there is reason to believe that the child needs protection, or the police if there is reason to believe the child is in imminent danger or that a criminal offense has been committed. The principal has the authority to suspend a school staff member whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.

- ii. **Volunteer**

Where there are allegations of child abuse by a volunteer, the principal is responsible for reporting the matter to Children's Services if there is reason to believe that the child needs protection, or the police if there is reason to believe the child is in imminent danger or that a criminal offense has been committed. The School Authority has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" prohibiting attendance at school by a volunteer whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.

- iii. **Contract Workers and Other Persons**

Where there are allegations of child abuse by a contract worker or other person at school or at an independent school activity outside of the school, the principal is responsible for reporting the matter to Children's Services if there is reason to believe that the child needs protection, or the police if there is reason to believe the child is in imminent danger or that a criminal offense has been committed. The School Authority has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" prohibiting from attending at the school a contract worker or other person whose presence threatens the safety and welfare of students.

- II. School personnel who have reason to believe that another employee, volunteer, contract service provider or other person on school property or supervising an independent school activity outside of the school has abused a student, must report the incident or information to the school principal. It is the responsibility of the principal to investigate the allegations and, in collaboration with the school personnel, determine what action is required.
- III. Parents of the children alleged to have been abused in the school setting must be informed by the principal of the allegations and the outcome of the school investigation, unless there are special circumstances, e.g., relating to a child protection or police investigation, or endangerment of the child.



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- IV. Where there are allegations of child abuse by a staff member, volunteer, contract service provider or other persons, the School Authority has the authority to issue a "No Trespass Order" prohibiting the volunteer's attendance at school. The order, provided orally or in writing, to the volunteer, contracted service provider or other person, and copied to the police, must specify the date of issue, the reason for the order and the termination date of the order (Such orders may be re-issued on an annual basis if required). This authority is provided under Trespass to Premises Act, s.2(2)(a).

Reporting to the Police

- V. Not every incident that might constitute an offense if proven will warrant police involvement. School officials are expected to exercise judgment. Where there is reason to believe that the alleged child abuse by employees, volunteers, contract service providers or other persons may constitute a criminal offence warranting police involvement, the school official must report the matter to police. If there is any uncertainty if a criminal offense has occurred, school officials must consult with the police regarding the matter.

Reporting to a Child Welfare Worker

- VI. Although the primary responsibility for dealing with abuse allegations involving independent school staff, volunteers or contract workers, rests with an independent school official and the parents, there may still be a need to report to Children's Services. Where there is reason to believe that abuse or neglect has taken place outside the scope of the independent school investigation and the parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child, or there is reason to believe that the parent is unwilling or unable to protect the child with respect to the abuse that is the subject of the independent school investigation, a school official must report this to Children's Services in accordance with the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*.

4. Duty to Report Professional Misconduct

- The Board Chairperson or representative must promptly provide the Registrar at Alberta Education a written and signed report if the authorized person has reason to believe that another authorized person has engaged in conduct that involves sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a student (Education Act, s218(2))
- If a principal suspends, dismisses, or disciplines an authorized person for misconduct that involves physical harm to a student or minor, or significant emotional harm to a student or minor, the principal must without delay send to the chairperson of the school board a report regarding the suspension, dismissal, or disciplinary action.
- If the school board suspends, dismisses, or disciplines an authorized person, they must without delay notify the principal and must without delay report the matter to the Registrar pursuant to section 24 of the *Teaching Profession Act*.

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5. Protocols on Relationships with Partner Agencies

- The school will obtain the names and contact information of local agencies that will aid when dealing with child abuse and/or neglect. (Agencies and contact information are provided in Appendix A.)
- The principal/vice-principal will inform school staff and regular volunteers of local protocols that are in place with the Alberta Ministry of Children's Services for cases of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Police are contacted whenever there is a criminal investigation, or the child is in immediate danger. Employees should become familiar with these protocols as outlined in Appendix A.
- School personnel will promote a working relationship with the local Children's Services and Police on reporting suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect and cooperating with these parties in their response to reports. The school will identify personnel within Children's Services and/or other organizations who are able to support the school in training staff to recognize signs of abuse, protect abused students and report abuse and neglect to the appropriate authorities.

6. Staff Training and Review

- The principal/vice-principal will ensure that all school personnel, contractors, and regular volunteers who are working with children are aware of and understand how to carry out their ethical and legal duty when responding to concerns about child abuse and/or neglect.
- The authority/school will annually review with school personnel the indicators of child abuse and/or neglect, how to receive a report of abuse, what actions are required, prevention measures, reporting child abuse and/or neglect protocols, and everyone's legal responsibility if they suspect abuse and/or neglect of a child.



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Appendix A

Contact Information for Partner Agencies with Respect to Child Abuse

In the event of suspected child abuse and/or neglect involving parents or parental failure to protect a child, the individual learning of or suspecting abuse and/or neglect will contact one or more of the following agencies: Alberta Children's Services and the Police if the child is in immediate danger and/or when a criminal offense is suspected.

If a child is in immediate danger, or if a criminal offense has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur, call the police. Make a report to the child welfare worker at Children's Services after you have called the police. In a case where the disclosure suggests that the child is in immediate danger, the child is kept at the school until the police arrive.

- If the alleged incident happened in Coaldale or areas to the north, south or east, make the report to Taber Children's Services. If the alleged incident happened anywhere west of Coaldale, make the report to Lethbridge Children's Services. When a report is made, the caller can request to speak with an intake worker who will take the information.
 - Taber Children's Services: 403-223-7921
 - Lethbridge Children's Services: 403-381-5500 or 403-381-5555
- Alternately or after hours, call the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-5437(KIDS)
- To report that a child is in immediate danger and/or a criminal offence against a child has been or is likely to be committed, please call:
 - Police (Coaldale RCMP): (403)345-5000
 - Emergency: 9-1-1



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Appendix B

Frequently Asked Questions

1. WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT?

POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF NEGLECT

Physical Indicators

- underweight or dehydrated
- injuries where medical care has been unusually delayed or avoided
- injuries resulting from a lack of supervision.
- medical or dental needs that are consistently unattended to
- "Failure to thrive" where no medical reason has been found
- clothing is torn, dirty, does not fit or inadequate for weather conditions
- persistent hunger
- poor or inadequate nutrition
- poor personal hygiene

Behavioural Indicators

- forages for, hoards or steals food
- developmental delay or setbacks related to a lack of stimulation
- poor school attendance
- inappropriately takes on a caregiver role for a parent of siblings
- tired or unable to concentrate at school
- appears sad or has flat affect
- reluctant to go home; speaks of being or appears to be left alone at home a lot, unsupervised
- is involved in behaviour such as misuse of drugs or alcohol, stealing, fire-setting
- does not respond to affection or stimulation



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POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Physical Indicators

- bed-wetting and/or frequent diarrhea
- frequent psychosomatic complaints, headaches, nausea, abdominal pains

Behavioural Indicators

- mental or emotional development lags
- isolated and has no friends or complains of social isolation
- behaviour inappropriate for age
- fear of failure, overly high standards, reluctant to play
- constantly apologizing or trying too hard to please others
- fears consequences of actions, often leading to lying
- extreme withdrawal or aggressiveness, mood swings
- overly compliant, too well-mannered
- excessive neatness and cleanliness
- extreme attention-seeking behaviour
- poor peer relationships
- severe depression, suicidal ideation
- runaway attempts
- violence is a subject for art or writing
- forbidden contact with other children
- shows little anxiety toward strangers
- unusual severe anxiety or worries



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POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical Indicators

- injuries to a child for which there is no explanation, the explanation does not fit with the injuries, or the story keeps changing
- injuries at different stages of healing
- injuries that have a pattern or look like they may have been caused by an object (hand, stick, buckle, stove element)
- bruising in unusual places such as ears, trunk, neck or buttocks
- burns on various parts of their body
- unusual behavior or appearance

Behavioural Indicators

- afraid or reluctant to go home, or runs away
- shows unusual aggression, rages, or tantrums
- be defensive about their injuries
- flinches when touched; not able to tolerate physical contact or touch
- wears clothing that covers their body even when the weather is warm
- be reluctant to undress around others
- has changes in school performance and attendance
- withdraws from family, friends and activities previously enjoyed
- poor self-esteem (e.g., describes self as bad, feels punishment is deserved, is very withdrawn)
- suicidal thoughts or self-destructive behaviour (e.g., self-mutilation, suicide attempt, extreme risk-taking behaviour)



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POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Physical Indicators

- unexplained or persistent pain, bleeding, or unusual discharge in the genital or anal area
- pregnancy
- sexually transmitted diseases

Behavioural Indicators

- engages in age-inappropriate sexual play or exhibits age-inappropriate sexual knowledge (e.g., through drawing or play)
- forces or coerces another child to engage in sexual play
- inserts objects into vagina or rectum
- directs sexually intrusive behaviour to adults
- starts wetting or soiling their pants, wetting the bed or thumb-sucking
- flinches when touched
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, fearful, or depressed
- afraid to go to sleep, has nightmares or sleeps long hours
- has unexplained gifts, new clothes, phone/device, or money
- are secretive about "new" friends, activities, phone calls or internet use
- is secretive or reactive about their browser history, websites they visit or contacts on their phone
- has changes in school performance and attendance
- has unexplained developmental setbacks (e.g., was toilet trained but reverts)
- is involved in sexually exploitive activities, such as performing sex acts for money
- is involved in behaviour such as misuse of drug or alcohol, stealing, fire-setting

2. HOW SHOULD I RECEIVE A REPORT FROM A CHILD?

When a child approaches you, what you say and do will help the child or youth feel safe and supported. If they tell you they are being neglected, abused, or sexually exploited, make sure you:

- Listen
- CONTROL YOUR REACTIONS -Stay calm and react without shock, disbelief, anger, judgement, or fear
- Let the child or youth tell you what happened in their own words without interruption
- Listen carefully without asking questions
- Never communicate blame – it is never the fault of the person who has been hurt
- Reassure them that it is right to tell, and it is not their fault
- Communicate praise
- Acknowledge how they are feeling (scared, angry, embarrassed, hurt, sad)
- Help them feel comforted and supported by saying things like:
 - I believe you and I will support you
 - It is okay to feel scared, angry, and hurt
 - I will try to help you figure out what happens next

Approved on: October 4, 2022



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- You are brave to talk about this and it is right to tell someone
- Minimize Exposure
- Display an appropriate amount of physical affection – be aware that someone has crossed the child’s boundaries
- Avoid making promises

Soon after the child or youth tells you what is happening, find a private place. Write down what you heard and saw. Be sure to:

- Use the same words the child used
- Describe the way the child looked, how they behaved and other things you noticed
- Try to be objective – write only the facts and observations without interpretation or opinion
- Keep your notes private and secure

Note: School personnel, while continuing to provide support, should NOT interview the child after receiving the initial disclosure from the child as this could interfere with the investigation. Interviewing, especially in criminal activity, is a complex process and must be left to the trained professional.

3. **UNDER WHAT CONDITIONS IS THERE A DUTY TO REPORT?**

Under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, anyone who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe a child is being sexually, physically, emotionally abused or neglected has a legal obligation to file a report. You may have witnessed something concerning or maybe the child has given subtle hints or clues. The best-case scenario is you’re wrong. Worst case scenario is leaving the child to suffer in silence. By speaking out against child abuse, you can lend your voice to children and youth who haven’t yet found theirs. Here are six important things to remember when reporting child abuse:

- Each child displays “signs” of abuse differently
 - Every child is unique and responds to trauma in different ways. Although there is no diagnostic tool, a drastic and prolonged change in a child’s typical pattern of behaviour may be cause for concern.
- Reports can be made anonymously
 - If you’re worried you may be identified as a source, a report can be made anonymously through Crime Stoppers or the Child Abuse Hotline. You may choose to report the abuse through a local police agency, but making a report through your local police agency cannot guarantee anonymity.



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- Online child exploitation must be reported too
 - Adults are also obligated to report the online exploitation of children and any material that depicts abuse towards children. Reporting online exploitation can be done anonymously and at the click of a button through Cybertip.ca
- Provide as much detail as possible
 - Providing as much detail as possible will help investigators do their jobs quickly and successfully. Is the child in immediate danger? How do you know the child? When did you first notice something wasn't right? What have you seen or heard? Where is the child now?
- It's our job to uncover the truth
 - Trust in the expertise of a team of law enforcement agencies, medical professionals, specialized assessors and child advocates to confirm if abuse is happening. We will know the difference between a malicious report and a genuine report of child abuse. We will not be angry at you for a report that turns out to be untrue. In fact, we thank you for helping us protect children and youth in our community.
- The child and their non-offending caregivers will be supported
 - Child Advocacy Centres throughout the country exist solely to act in the best interests of a child throughout the process of disclosure, investigation, prosecution and healing. If your report is investigated, rest assured the child is now safe, supported, believed and on the path towards recovery.

Child abuse is everyone's business. Ready to make a report? Here are some numbers you'll need to know:

- Your local police or RCMP detachment.
- Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-387-5437 (KIDS)
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or Text CONNECT to 686868
- Crime Stoppers: 1-800-222-8477
- Online Exploitation: cybertip.ca